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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE
Preparatory Committee
First session
Geneva, 1 - 5 May 2000
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

REPORTS, STUDIES AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION FOR THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE AND THE WORLD CONFERENCE

Contribution*/ submitted by the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations

The Secretary-General has received the following contribution which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 April 2000]

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*/ This contribution is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

I am writing to propose that the subject of anti-Semitism be included in the agenda of the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

In recent years, bombings of and shootings at Jewish centers, attacks on Jewish cemeteries, and Swastika daubings on synagogues have reached alarming proportions in Europe and the Western hemisphere, as have reports of Holocaust denial and anti-Jewish hate mongering on the Internet. And defamatory definitions in dictionaries, which legitimize bigotry, have not been adequately addressed.

Key UN personalities have recognized the problem of anti-Semitism and the need for UN action. In a message delivered on April 3rd at the opening of the UN exhibit entitled "Visas for Life," UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared, "Next year in South Africa we will hold a World Conference on Racism at which, I should stress, anti-Semitism will be one of the forms of intolerance targeted for action." (SG/SM 7345)

Earlier, on March 20th Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Secretary-General of the Conference, referred to major problems that need to be solved, including anti-Semitism. In her message to the "Visas for Life" opening, Mrs. Robinson stated: "We cannot educate properly or plan effective strategies to combat the evils of racism, including anti-Semitism and xenophobia -- still such potent forces in all societies -- unless we learn lessons from the past."

Accordingly, I would be very grateful to receive assurances from you that anti-Semitism will be on the agenda of the South Africa Conference.